

When Pipe Bombs and a “Pretty Brunette” Collide:

The Multiple Identities of Bernardine Dohrn

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Violence is as American as apple pie.

-Bernardine Dohrn

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Introduction

*"The letter, which was signed 'Weather Underground' began 'Hello. This is Bernardine Dohrn,
I'm going to read a declaration of a state of war.'"¹*

It is spring, 1970, and the Weather Underground has just announced its plan to go underground and wage war on the United States government and its imperialist trademarks. The first written interaction between the Weather Underground and the United States government is introduced by a woman: Bernardine Dohrn. A central figure to the group and leading spokesperson, Dohrn led a militant, masculine revolutionary group during the 1960s and 1970s². As a female leader of a revolutionary group during this era, it is impossible to assess her position without taking into account her gender. As a woman raised during the second wave of feminism, Dohrn takes a leadership role in a violent, militant group during the women's liberation movement. In order to evaluate her role properly, one must understand the social construction and historical impact of the time period as well as Dohrn's rise in leadership in the Weather Underground collective.

¹ Jacobs, Ron. *The Way the Wind Blew: a History of the Weather Underground*. London: Verso, 1997. 106. Print.

² I use the idea of masculinity here and throughout this thesis as a societal construction. Militancy and violence, in my opinion, is inherently masculine because of societal norms. Throughout this thesis I seek to use masculinity as a social construction rather than as a way of stating that the group was mostly male.

The Vietnam War began in 1955, and a struggle against communism quickly ensued. The United States involved itself as a way to fight communism and aid the people of the destabilized country. However, anti-war sentiments were not out of the ordinary and soon college students were to be the mobilized of anti-war demonstrations and civil disobedience. The student organization named Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was formed in 1960 at the University of Michigan as a reaction to the United States' military action in Vietnam; furthermore, they wanted to aid in the civil rights movement as white allies. This group of college-aged, white students in Ann Arbor, Michigan felt the need to have their voices heard, and so the student group was formed, with its first meeting occurring on the campus that same year. The new Leftist organization wanted to create political change using New Left ideology; two years later they would release the Port Huron Statement, outlining their political manifesto and agenda.

The Port Huron Statement, released at the SDS national convention in 1962, expressed the collective's political agenda and intentions. Initially, it is clear that the members of the collective understand their privilege, yet feel the world is in a state of peril for others: "We are people of this generation, bred in at least modern comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit."³ Here, the students identify themselves as people of privilege and comfort. However, they are not addressing these concerns in reflection of themselves but rather as a world issue in which the United States is actively participating. Their political concerns are immediately addressed in the statement: "First, the permeating and victimizing fact of human degradation, symbolized by the southern struggle against racial

³ Students for a Democratic Society. "Appendix: The Port Huron Statement." *Democracy Is in the Streets: from Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*. By James Miller. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1995. 329. Print.

bigotry, compelled most of us from silence to activism.”⁴ The collective has signalled their opposition to the racial segregation occurring in the south, and in doing so become white allies to the cause. “Second, the enclosing fact of the Cold War, symbolized by the presence of the Bomb, brought awareness that we ourselves, and our friends, and millions of abstract “others” we knew more directly because of our common peril, might die at any time.”⁵ Human rights encompass their political agenda, cloaking their statements with the possibility of human death- whether that human death occurs to them or not. The statement goes on to create an image of youth who were no longer blinded by the American political system and its flaws, and they were determined to provoke mass radical change. “But we are the minority- the vast majority of our people regard the temporary equilibriums of our society and world as eternally functional parts. In this is perhaps the outstanding paradox: we ourselves are imbued with urgency yet the message of our society is that there is no viable alternative to the present.”⁶ This statement captures the beliefs of the movement: there is, in fact, a feasible alternative to the American system of capitalism (and its further globalization) that must be sought out in order to aid the oppressed; the statement outlines their suggested reforms. The Port Huron statement goes on to further explain what the group’s tangible change to the social system would be:

We would replace power rooted in possession, privilege, or circumstance by power and uniqueness rooted in love reflectiveness, reason, and creativity. As a *social system* we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation, governed by two central aims: that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation.⁷

⁴ Miller, p. 328

⁵ Miller, p. 329

⁶ Miller, p. 330

⁷ Miller, p. 333

SDS sought to create a society where all men were created equal, and all were treated with respect, both domestically and internationally. Though far from utopian, the members sought a social system that would at the very least recognize and uphold human rights; where peaceful civil disobedience could create change in the American political system. Most importantly for this thesis, the language of the Port Huron statement is masculine in nature; it refers constantly to changing the life of “men” and “his” struggles. “Men” is gender exclusive, indirectly excluding the women in the group from having these struggles. However, this did not stop Bernardine Dohrn from joining the collective in 1966 and making the struggle of the global poor her passion.

In 1968, Dohrn joined the Students for a Democratic Society a year after graduating from the University of Chicago with a Juris Doctor. As SDS grew, factions within the collective began to develop; notably the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) and the Progressive Labor Party (PLP). PLP viewed the student-based organization of SDS as a way to mobilize on college campuses, and differentiated college students’ roles in the struggle from those in the working world and in high school. RYM, in contrast, viewed the general youth population as a further populace to mobilize, creating a larger force against human injustice. Bernardine Dohrn aligned with the ideals of RYM, and soon became a leader of the radical wing within SDS. Nonetheless, with time the differences between PLP and RYM and their visions for SDS became more and more apparent. The factions would not be able to coexist in one leftist group; a split would have to occur.

In 1969, at the SDS National Convention, the eventual split within SDS was foreshadowed by a statement published in the *New Left Notes*, the official newspaper all attendees of the convention received. The political manifesto entitled “You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows” (referencing the Bob Dylan song,

“Subterranean Homesick Blues”), outlined RYM’s political intentions and the vision they had for the future political actions of SDS. The statement was signed by 11 members of the RYM faction of SDS, including Bernardine Dohrn. The statement emphasizes that every symbol of materialism that Americans use and own, belonged to those, we as American people, oppress.

The US empire, as a worldwide system, channels wealth, based upon the labor and resources of the rest of the world, into the United States. The relative affluence existing in the United States is directly dependent upon the labor and natural resources of the Vietnamese, the Angolans, the Bolivians and the rest of the peoples of the Third World. All of the United Airlines Astrojets, all of the Holiday Inns, all of Hertz's automobiles, your television set, car and wardrobe already belong, to a large degree to the people of the rest of the world.⁸

Here, RYM makes the claim that because the United States attains its wealth based on the labor of the “rest of the world”, to a degree everything we own is already being shared on a global scale⁹. The group then goes onto state that the goal of the future actions is to destroy US imperialism and implement world communism. “The goal is the destruction of US imperialism and the achievement of a classless world: world communism.”¹⁰ This idea of “world communism” comes just a decade after the end of the second red scare and the resurgence of McCarthyism that took place after World War II. This statement alone gives the reader feelings of radical action on behalf of RYM, using words so denounced by the American government at the time. The manifesto goes on to account for the necessity of alliance with the black community as well as the necessity of a complete overhaul of the United States’ imperialist system. “In every case, our aim is to raise anti-imperialist and anti-racist consciousness and tie the struggles of working-class youth (and all working people) to the struggles of Third World

⁸ Asbley, Karin, Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, John Jacobs, Jeff Jones, Gerry Long, Home Machtinger, Jim Mellen, Terry Robbins, Mark Rudd, and Steve Tappis. "You Don't Need A Weatherman To Know Which Way The Wind Blows." *New Left Notes*[Chicago] 18 June 1969. Print.

⁹ Asbley, Karin et. al

¹⁰ Asbley, Karin et. al

people, rather than merely joining fights to improve material conditions, even though these fights are certainly justified.”¹¹ Here, RYM seeks to align the struggles of working-class youth with those of third world peoples and therefore create sentiments of anti-imperialism within the American youth. This statement seeks to mobilize the youth in masses, creating a tie between the privileged youth of America and the oppressed peoples of the third world. The statement ends with the call for a revolutionary movement that fights against these aforementioned American flaws that have transcended domesticity and have been globalized due to the United States’ involvement in the Cold War.

The most important task for us toward making the revolution, and the work our collectives should engage in, is the creation of a mass revolutionary movement, without which a clandestine revolutionary party will be impossible. A revolutionary mass movement is different from the traditional revisionist mass base of “sympathizers.” Rather it is akin to the Red Guard in China, based on the full participation and involvement of masses of people in the practice of making revolution; **a movement with a full willingness to participate in the violent and illegal struggle.** It is a movement diametrically opposed to the elitist idea that only leaders are smart enough or interested enough to accept full revolutionary conclusions. It is a movement built on the basis of faith in the masses of people.¹²

RYM officially makes the call for violence as an option in this statement. In the eyes of the radical faction, the “willingness to participate in violence” is an essential piece to the movement itself and its effectiveness as well as the mobilization of the white, college educated students that made up the composition SDS since its origins.¹³ This statement would go on to create the Weather Underground faction of SDS- the radical, violent group that would soon have Bernardine Dohrn as its mouthpiece.

The Weather Underground formed in 1969, with most members from RYM leaving SDS in favor of the militant group. The collective wasted no time and quickly initiated their

¹¹ Asbley, Karin et. al

¹² Asbley, Karin et. al

¹³ Asbley, Karin et. al

attacks on American injustice. Their first action on October 9th, 1969 was a three-day violent attack on the city of Chicago known as the “Days of Rage”. “Armed with helmets, baseball bats and bottomless reserves of arrogance and self-loathing, the Weathermen assembled after nightfall in Lincoln Park, nerving themselves to smash through their bourgeois inhibitions and “tear pig city apart” in a “national action” they called “The Days of Rage.”¹⁴ Though the organization did not attract the numbers of radical youth they had hoped, their actions were no less violent. They initiated the three-day rampage with the bombing of the Haymarket Square Memorial, a symbol of their opposition to the Chicago Police and the capitalist institution it represents: the American government. Days later the collective tore through downtown Chicago, destroying shops, cars- anything that could be construed as a site of American imperialism.

This violent action juxtaposed with the women of the group is an interesting binary of difference; further substantiated on the second day which was dedicated to the women’s caucus of the organization and their violence against injustice. Led by Dohrn, the women’s conclave mobilized to engage in the rage themselves and attempted to, though most were apprehended by the Chicago police that had been watching the collective since their first day of action. This action embodied the points made in their statement “You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows”; direct, violent action against imperialism. However, this violent initiative was met with resistance from other Leftists, officially casting the Weathermen as a radical faction of the New Left; unfortunately, not all that agreed with the leftist political ideology could agree with the actions of the Weather Underground. Ron Jacobs provides insight into these opinions in his book entitled *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground.*¹⁵ He states, “The harshest criticism of Weatherman in revolutionary New Left

¹⁴ Miller, p. 311

¹⁵ Jacobs, Ron. *The Way the Wind Blew: a History of the Weather Underground*. London: Verso, 1997. 106. Print.

came from the *Guardian* collective. In their report on the Days of Rage, Carl Davidson and Randy Furst called the action a ‘fiasco’ controlled by the police with ‘brutal precision’.”¹⁶ Here, a fellow Leftist organization criticized the Weathermen, further demonstrating the schism on the New Left between those who believed violence could create change and those who believed in peaceful civil disobedience. Jacobs goes on to cite that the *Guardian* collective disagreed with the way that the Weathermen neglected to mobilize among the youth for the Days of Rage; they were also critical of the group because of the image they confirmed for all Leftist organizations, one of violence as priority, giving many people reasons not to join the revolutionary Left. This information is helpful and necessary when thinking of the scope the Weathermen had. Though they were part of the New Left, even those in agreement with their fundamental ideas disagreed with their violent displays of action at the Days of Rage. This criticism would not end, notably directing its attention to women in the collective.

The way in which the Weather Underground treated woman and their general exclusion within the group is often criticized; this criticism cites that the male chauvinistic group used females rather than empowered them. “In Morgan’s letter, Weather women were equated with the ‘Manson slaves,’ and the ‘Stanley Kowalski image and...practice of sex on demand for males in the Weathermen was sharply criticized.”¹⁷ Using Stanley Kowlaski, a character in Tennessee Williams’ play in *A Streetcar Named Desire* that was very violent towards his wife frames the men of the collective as alpha males that demand sex in a way that can be aligned with domestic violence. In his chapter dedicated to the women of the collective, Jacobs creates an image of the women that is deleterious; i.e. that they exercised little power or agency in the group and were simply there as entertainment for the men. Furthermore, Dan Berger states that

¹⁶ Jacobs, p. 70

¹⁷ Jacobs, p. 91

men in the organization did not give the same importance to women's issues as the group gave to anti-slavery and anti-capitalism struggles. "Few men in the organization viewed the struggle against patriarchy as important, and women's initiatives did not change the overall culture of the WUO...Hostility to feminism characterized the organization from the beginning, even though many members- including many of those committed to the politics- were women and feminists."¹⁸ Berger, an apparent fan of the organization, even provides criticism on the topic of women in the organization, though he concedes that many members of the group were both women and feminists. Berger claims here that anti-feminist sentiments pervaded the group from its inception, which is an interesting note considering both the communique that announced the split from SDS and the communique that announced the war against imperialism were both delivered and partially written by Bernardine Dohrn. Dohrn clearly does not fit the role of females that the criticism of the organization implies.

This thesis explores and recreates Bernardine Dohrn's role in the Weather Underground. As a child of the women's liberation movement and the second wave of feminism, Dohrn chose to join a radical, militant group that acted violently against the United States government. Dohrn acted as both one of the leaders and the spokesperson for the collective, with the majority of communiques signed by her. Furthermore, the initial communique, which includes a "declaration of war", is signed by a woman, a juxtaposition of the innocence and vulnerability of a woman with the violence and resistance of a war; here, a woman is declaring a violent battle waged against an inherently male governmental system. Though criticism of the organization often creates a negative portrayal of the leftist group and their treatment of women, Dohrn embodied the direct opposite; a woman in power and essentially the face of the organization, with a voice

¹⁸ Berger, Dan. *Outlaws of America: the Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity*. Oakland, CA: AK, 2006. 291. Print.

within the leadership of the collective. Dohrn is neither a façade for the organization nor a figurehead; she is an empowered woman with the ability to circumvent gender binaries constructed by the social historical moment of the 1960s and 1970s. Though direct information for her (such as a memoir) is impossible to find, this thesis fills the gaps with different representations of Dohrn that seek to tell the story that has not yet been told. This thesis at its core seeks to uncover a story that has been overshadowed; to write Bernardine Dohrn back into a history that seems to have overlooked her.

This thesis will explore representations of Dohrn through film, photographs, communiqües and press coverage (representations of Dohrn in public media) as well as an oral interview personally conducted in January of 2012. These representations will serve to further prove that Dohrn challenged socially constructed gender norms; she worked to climb the patriarchal ranks of the organization, only to have been criticized (indirectly) by the male chauvinistic tendencies the collective appeared to embody. Dohrn is an interesting character in the organization because of her ability to bypass gender norms in order to attain power and political agency. Though Dohrn's role in the Weather Underground is often overlooked, insufficiently accounted for, and/or completely silence by historians and fellow activists alike, Dohrn is a physical representation of the empowered woman. Rather than point to the machismo of the Weather Underground, the progression that Dohrn made from SDS member in 1966 to spokesperson for the Weather Bureau in 1970 demonstrates a sufficient change in the patriarchal order of the Leftist organization. Her role as a leader of a violent, revolutionary group created a portrait of the radicalized and revolutionized woman. Dohrn's political ideology and understanding for the necessity of violence cast her outside of the traditional groups of the feminist movement. She used the Weather Underground as a platform to engage in political

agency for causes that she supported and aligned with; within this framework she had the ability to discuss women's issues and work towards them outside of the women's movement. Though not the guiding force or eventual goal of the Weather Underground, Dohrn put a female face to a violent movement- making the contrast of femininity and war evident and bending the rules of stereotypical gender performance and normality while challenging the social construction of womanhood.

The Voice of the Movement

In order to begin the retelling of Bernardine Dohrn's story it is necessary to engage the moments in which her voice is silenced. *Fugitive Days* written by Bill Ayers is a memoir of the activist's involvement in the Weather Underground Organization. Ayers was a leading figure in the organization, one of the key players in the actions the group was able to accomplish and married Bernardine Dohrn. His memoir accounts his life from childhood until adulthood, on the day he turned himself into the police with his wife. The relationship between Ayers and Dohrn is included in the memoir and sheds light to the role Dohrn played in the organization.

Dohrn is introduced in the memoir as the girlfriend of a fellow Weatherman, and quickly becomes good friends with Ayers. She is described as passionate and hard-headed, opinionated and stern. The friendship between Ayers and Dohrn was solidified when Ayers went to visit the West Coast Tribe (the western division of the Weather Underground) and the two leaders, Dohrn and a man named Jeffrey, and had the opportunity to meet with all of the division leaders of the organization. Unfortunately, what is missing from the story is how Dohrn became a leader of the West Coast Tribe. She is introduced in the story as already having solidified a leadership position in the organization, but Ayers never comments on her journey to becoming a voice for the organization.

Ayers states that Dohrn helped him forget their gender differences through their friendship.

We had been passionate and forceful together, and between us I had forgotten the differences of the sexes at first...Our friendship had all the important characteristics of love: a sense of a future together, intense shared experiences, vulnerability and agony and a fear of loss, a reluctance to name it with a word. There was desire, too, but not for exclusive affection. The emancipation of women and of the body was in the air, and while we wanted affection, it could have to be chosen every day.¹⁹

Notably, Dohrn had the ability to shed her role as just a woman and cross gender lines in order to be heard by not only Ayers, but the entire organization. How did a woman during this time have the ability to surpass her gender restrictions in order to become the leader of an underground, mostly male, organization? Clearly, the social issues of the time were affecting this relationship as well. The idea of the “emancipation of women and the body” sheds light on the sexual and gender revolutions of the late 60s and early 70s, and perhaps lends itself to the research necessary to understand the role of women in the Weather Underground. Dohrn’s journey to becoming a leader of the West Coast Tribe would shed light on her role in the organization. Ayers’ memoir provides the later years of the organization and frames her as the spokesperson of the revolution, but does not provide context for how she attained the position. The lack of attention paid to her may be due in part to the fact that she has always been a silenced figurehead. This clearly did not change, even in the case of her husband’s memoir. However, this is not the only instance in which Dohrn is barely mentioned, if at all.

The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground by Ron Jacobs provides a brief but detailed account of the history of the Weather Underground Organization. Jacobs states he was an anti-war activist during the 1970s and includes himself as an organizer for Leftist organizations in the preface. An interesting point to note is the inclusion of the women’s perspective in this account of the Weather Underground. An entire chapter is devoted to the

¹⁹ Ayers, William. *Fugitive Days: A Memoir*. Boston, MA: Beacon, 2001. 210-11. Print.

women of the organization and their desire to be viewed as fundamental members of the collective. What is striking is that in every instance that includes the general women of the Weather Underground, Bernardine Dohrn is never mentioned. Jacobs speaks of the women of the group very generally and usually refers to them collectively; however, as one of the leaders and spokespeople of the organization, one can inquire why Dohrn is never accounted for in relation to these “women”. As one of the figureheads of the group, it’s important to ask why as a woman, Dohrn is never included with the other women of the organization. Furthermore, her role as a women’s activist prior to the Weather Underground is never accounted for; that is where her true politicization began

The story of Bernardine Dohrn and her role in the Weather Underground begins with her politicization after law school. Dohrn graduated from the University of Chicago Law School in 1967, and promptly moved to New York City. At this point, the second wave of feminism was just beginning, with small women’s collectives sprouting around the country. When Dohrn arrived in New York City, she began to form a women’s collective. According to Dohrn, she

...was sorta forming a women’s group that was you know just listening to other women and telling their stories and freaking out that we had so many things, you know, in common: anxieties about ourselves, hope, understanding of women’s history or the earlier feminist movements in the world.²⁰

Though Dohrn eventually joined a militant group that focused on anti-racism and anti-war campaigns, she was part of a women’s collective, that provided “both a self-discovery and a projected critical analysis of the world that we’d grown up in and understood”.²¹ These groups not only created a political platform for women to organize but they also allowed women to

²⁰ "Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

²¹ "Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

address issues of gender and rights. This group enabled a politicized female, Dohrn, to work on the issues surrounding women's rights during the second wave of feminism. However, there was a stark difference with this new generation of feminism and the way they chose to express their opinions. According to Dohrn, "[...] it was the younger generation and we came up in a moment between the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement of a much more, of a fierce sense of direct action."²² This new generation of college students was at the forefront of counter culture and political upheaval during the late 1960s and 1970s. They had a different way of organizing, one that did not circumvent the issues but rather tackled them head on. "So the initial collectives were about [...] challenging advertising, women in advertising, the use of women's bodies, the construction of women as images of, that were pleasing to men and kinda women as object instead of subject- victim instead of actor in history."²³ This sense of direct action would categorize the 1960s and 1970s as a time of political upheaval, and Dohrn was a part of this. Nonetheless, the empowerment of women by women was met with some resistance though times were changing, and Dohrn would shift her focus in the struggle against American capitalism and misogyny.

This women's group that Dohrn formed and was a part of was critically assessing their position in the world and focused on women's role in society and how to change these rules. They relied on other women to explore their history as well as to explore themselves and their personal role as women. This portion of Dohrn's life is missing from most accounts of SDS and the Weather Underground. Perhaps it is not directly related to the history of either collective, though Dohrn's agency in her gender role as well as her interest in gender politics informed her role in the organization. Her choice (as she puts it) to pursue the political platform and agenda

²² Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

²³ "Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

that SDS and later, the Weather Underground, made their primary focus (anti-war and anti-racist campaigns) became the driving force of Dohrn's political activity; however, her earlier experience with second-wave feminism provided a political awakening that molded her political ideology even after joining SDS.

Bernardine Dohrn joined SDS in 1968, citing that it was a choice she made to leave the women's collective. "...the choices, you know I still don't feel like I made the right choice, I don't know if there was a right choice. I felt like I was taking the feminism that I was just growing to understand into the anti-war and anti-racist movements."²⁴ Dohrn, here states that she felt she could integrate the issues of feminism into the issues that were most important to her, SDS and later the Weather Underground. According to Dohrn, as a white woman, she felt that she needed to join the anti-war and anti-racist movements and could not ignore these issues. "And that while many of my friends were going into a separatists, womanists kinda form of organizing I felt that we couldn't you know leave Vietnam or the questions of the freedom movement to the side as white women."²⁵ Rather than put feminism at the forefront of her political interests, she made the choice to integrate it into her political platform in SDS and the Weather Underground. Distancing herself from the women's movement was a political choice she had to make. She had to prioritize her political goals:

So I did make that kinda political choice, but I didn't see it as- I tried not to see it as- an ideologue choice in a sense that there were some women's organizations, all women's organizations, that formed that were dedicated to doing our part to continuing [mumbled word] against the war, although they became a minority in the women's movement at that moment in time. So I guess what, you know, we

²⁴ "Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

²⁵ "Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

were all trying to integrate the issues from different sides, not all, but many of us were trying to integrate the issues from different sides.²⁶

Though her politicization may have been caused by the women's movement, Dohrn's political choices aligned with those in SDS. Dohrn chose to join the group, and later become an officer and spokesperson of one of the most militant anti-war/anti-racist collectives of the 1960s.

Though she sought to incorporate feminist issues into the SDS and Weather Underground framework, the account she tells of her national leader selection conference for SDS sheds light on the general feelings on women in the collective.

So I had just become at the very conference for which I was selected as a national leader of SDS, there was a women's presentation which I was not part of on the stage and the entire auditorium exploded in anger with men shouting at the women on the stage, women getting in the audience, fighting with women on the stage. You know in every organization not just in SDS, this idea that women, that we were breaking out of traditional roles, [mumbled word] being enacted, and it was a new idea.²⁷

At the same conference that a woman was elected into national leadership, explosive arguments broke out about women stepping out of their socially constructed roles and demanding power.

Though the women's movement was occurring at the same time as the rise of SDS, clearly misogyny in the United States was still embedded in the system. Even on the New Left, women could not escape the patriarchal systems that pervaded this culture. Dohrn goes onto state: "two or three years later things had changed", but the historical context of the period did not allow for feminist issues to be brought to the forefront initially. Women who defied their socially constructed roles found a society unprepared to accept these challenges.

²⁶ "Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

²⁷ "Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

Dohrn discusses her gender awareness while being in SDS and later the Weather Underground and states that she did have to take her gender into account when in the collectives:

I was aware of it because when I was the first woman elected to national office, national office, national leadership in SDS you know it was commented about. I was aware of it because that year when I went speaking, I spoke in Yale, and at Princeton and you know it was 100% male you know, the audience it was absolutely creepy I have to say and I don't want to say assaulted, that's a little too strong of a word but you know it was difficult.²⁸

She states that her gender was commented on when she was elected into national leadership of SDS. At that point, it would seem that Dohrn had proven herself in a way that the collective felt comfortable allowing her to be elected to leadership; yet her gender was still an issue. Travelling to denounce the war, she addressed rooms that were completely male, further adding to the emphasis on her gender. Though the second wave of feminism was spreading, patriarchal social constructions were still at play within leftist organizations, including SDS.

"I think the idea of women being fierce critics of U.S. government policy in practice in the world elicited a certain kind of anger..." Dohrn makes the point here that in practice, women were met with resistance when they opposed the male dominated U.S. government. Politics, along with the ability to comment or criticize them, was largely male territory. Because of social constructions and binaries largely upheld by the inherently male-dominated governmental system that runs the United States, Dohrn felt that criticism from women elicited anger that she later categorizes as gendered in relation to Jane Fonda's activism. "Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda went to Vietnam, why didn't he get the attacks that she got? He went on to be a congressman and you know statesperson and she certainly survived it but the type of vitriol directed at her or at other, you know, women leaders was uniquely filled with hatred and I would argue gendered hated."

²⁸ "Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

Here, Dohrn is commenting on the role of Jane Fonda and the hatred directed at her political activism. Dohrn met Fonda while organizing on military bases for military resistance to the war, and Fonda's political activism was a topic of discussion. Fonda stepped out of the traditional role of a women through her political activism and garnered hatred that Dohrn categorizes as gendered because of its origin. The criticism she received was not due to her political position but the fact that she was politically active at all, while her male counterpart (Tom Hayden) gained governmental political power through his activism. The inherent prejudices in the system were made apparent through the gendered hatred that Dohrn makes clear.

This image of Dohrn does not appear in other histories of the movement. The story of Dohrn as a feminist activist is missing from the history of SDS and the Weather Underground. Her gender almost seems erased, neither mentioned nor acknowledged. Her lack of recognition in texts is rather astonishing and the neglect of her feminism is puzzling, especially in the early years of her participation in the collective. In order to comprehend the full story of Dohrn, it is important to note where the gaps in the retelling lie.

In order to further assess the role of Dohrn's voice in the movement, one must also analyze written work by the collective; especially those signed by Bernardine Dohrn as well as other texts where she appears, or rather, fails to appear. First, it is important to note the inclusion of the idea of sexism in *Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism: The Political Statement of the Weather Underground*²⁹. This book written by the collective representatives is a blueprint of their political ideology and includes a section entitled,

²⁹ Dohrn, Bernardine, Billy Ayers, Jeff Jones, and Celia Sojourn. *Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-imperialism : The Political Statement of the Weather Underground*. [San Francisco]: Communications, 1974. Print.

“Imperialism Means Sexism”³⁰. It blames the system (the capitalist government) for the dependency of women stating, “The systematic domination of women is an underpinning of imperialism: under imperialism, the organization and fabric of society- the family, production, reproduction, and all social relations- keep women dependent and powerless.”³¹ The section of the political manifesto blames imperialism and frames it as a “systematic terror against women”³² and describes it as a power structure designed to keep women at the bottom. The Weather Underground is imperative to this movement:

Our movement must be involved in the fight against domination and torture of our sisters in the Third World. We have a common enemy. The greatest male supremacists are the leading imperialists. They are Rockefeller, Moynihan, Kissinger. We cannot betray the struggle of women in general and our Third World sisters in particular. When we embrace these struggles as our own- and merge them with our own- we create a basis for revolutionary sisterhood and an international women’s movement against imperialism.

Here, the women of the collective framed male supremacy as a central issue. However, in practice the collective fell victim to male supremacy and its systematic effect on everything. In the official manifesto of the movement, the women’s movement is mentioned, yet it never became a central issue.

This disconnection runs through the Weather Underground with the patriarchal structure as the prime example; later in this thesis, a documentary entitled *Underground* will further demonstrate this point. Dohrn is repeatedly absent from the historical retelling of the movement, though her voice IS the voice of the movement. It seems the voice of Dohrn and other women in the collective are heard in their political manifesto, however, other accounts and histories of the organization fail to acknowledge Dohrn’s role in the organization, or fail to group her in with

³⁰ The signed names in the book are those of: Bernardine Dohrn, Billy Ayers, Jeff Jones, and Celia Sojourn.

³¹ Dohrn et. al, p. 87

³² Dohrn et. al, p. 88

sections on the women of the collective. Dohrn is seen as a separate entity apart from the general issues affecting the women of the collective.

The Face of the Movement

In order to assess her role in the group, it is necessary to turn to visuals of the radical leader, paying close attention to the way she is portrayed through pictures of the collective. One picture of particular interest is a photograph taken at the SDS convention in 1969, showing Bernardine Dohrn introducing the Weatherman faction to SDS (figure 1).

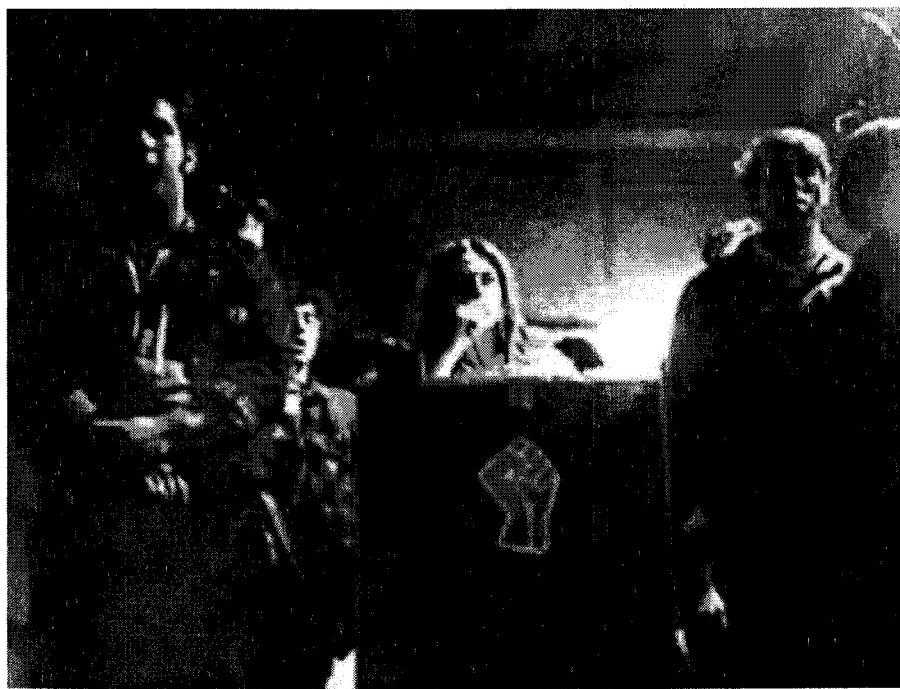


Figure 1³³

Here, Dohrn is centered, at the podium adorned with the SDS logo. According to Dan Berger³⁴, Mark Rudd is to the right of the photograph. Beginning with the surrounding features of the

³³

<http://www.google.com/imgres?q=Bernardine+dohrn+sds+convention&um=1&hl=en&biw=1280&bih=899&tbo=isch&tbnid=dZAS4WyMCHkChM:&imgrefurl=http://notmytribe.com/tag/cuba/page/2&docid=Nrt64Ksu1hipM&imgurl=http://www.notmytribe.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/sds-Bernardine-dohrn-rym-chicago-ayers-weatherman-underground.jpg&w=576&h=437&el=ZH3BTouOuXw0gGM8NjLBA&zoom=1&iact=rc&dur=176&sig=108441437257576636554&page=1&tbnh=160&tbnw=231&start=0&ndsp=22&ved=1t:429,r:1,s:0&tx=63&ty=61>

photograph, Dohrn is surrounded by men as she delivers this message about the Weatherman faction. She is a woman, delivering a message about a collective faction whose name itself is gendered. Surrounded by men, Dohrn appears protected while delivering this statement. The interplay of a woman delivering this radical statement with men surrounding her blurs the lines between power and projected weakness in relation to Dohrn. Though she has assumed the position of power to deliver the message, she must be surrounded by men in order to do so; this illuminates the tensions between the movement and its failure to use gender as a platform. However, the men are looking into the crowd rather than at Dohrn. This plays several roles; first, they have enough confidence in her to look away as she delivers their message rather than paying attention to her in case of a misstep. Moreover, they are looking at the crowd's reaction to their message. The way they are placed in this photograph already makes them seem like a collective group with a message to spread, and Dohrn is at the forefront of that message. She is made into an allegory for the group's message, though it does not include one that addresses women.

Dohrn, herself, also plays a role in the photograph. She commands attention due to her centrality in the photograph and the way light plays on her. The men in the picture are in shadows while Dohrn is fairly well lit. Furthermore, her stance sheds light on her position. She holds the microphone authoritatively, in a way demanding her message to be heard. Though surrounded by men, she is the leader of this meeting, and will have her voice heard. Her physical appearance is also necessary to take into account. Though one knows through the caption and the history of the Weather Underground (other photographs and stories) that the central figure is Dohrn, the only distinguishing feature that makes her appear feminine is the fact that she has long hair, a non-distinguishing factor at the time where men with long hair were commonplace.

³⁴ Berger, Dan. "Two, Three, Many SDSes: The End of SDS, The Beginning of New Groups." *Outlaws of America: the Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity*. Oakland, CA: AK, 2006. 74. Print.

Other than her long hair, the photograph is too dark for any female distinguishing factors to take place, another way of disengendering Dohrn. This strength and power that Dohrn commands is juxtaposed with the fact that though she is delivering a radical message, she is protected by the podium. The men around her remain unprotected while Dohrn must be shielded in a way. This further captures the gender tensions within the collective and society as a whole.

From the inception of the collective, Dohrn is the voice and face of the movement and this photograph demonstrates that. Through her placement, the men around her, and her lack of feminine features playing a role in the photograph, this picture may be a representation of gender politics in the collective; Dohrn is the voice and face, but the men around her are there to protect her and the message. Further photographic analysis will occur later in this thesis when in relation to media clippings, but still images are not the only visuals to analyze in respect to Dohrn.

Critical analysis of the visual representations of Dohrn is not limited to photography. Bernardine Dohrn appears in two films; one made in 1976 entitled *Underground*³⁵ and one made in 2004 entitled *The Weather Underground*³⁶. The former was shot while the collective was underground and includes commentary from Bill Ayers, Kathy Boudin, Cathy Wilkerson, and Bernardine Dohrn among others. The revolutionaries are shot in dim lighting or behind thin sheets in order to conceal their physical appearance, giving the viewer shadows of the collective members. The members state that they have been underground for five years when the film is shot, giving a rare glimpse into the lives of those underground. The first comments in the film

³⁵ *Underground*. Dir. Emile De Antonio, Haskell Wexler, and Mary Lampson. Perf. Bill Ayers, Kathy Boudin, Bernardine Dohrn, Jeff Jones and Cathy Wilkerson. Sphinx Productions, 1976. DVD.

³⁶ *The Weather Underground*. Dir. Sam Green and Bill Siegel. Perf. Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, Mark Rudd, Brian Flanagan, Naomi Jaffee, Laura Whitehorn, David Gilbert, Kathleen Neal Cleaver, and Todd Giltin. 2002. DVD.

are largely from the women present, though Dohrn is not introduced until later in the documentary. Members are asked to describe their political pasts as well as their journey through SDS and eventually the Weather Underground. Dohrn's voice is not named until about seven minutes into the documentary and when she explains her political past, she cites her parents as Midwest republicans stating that they voted for Joseph McCarthy. A fuzzy screen shot of Dohrn wearing a massive hat accompanies the telling of her story. Interestingly, Dohrn does not mention her work with women's rights in New York at all. In fact, she states that her first demonstration was an anti-HUAC protest, and then goes immediately into her work in Chicago on housing issues.³⁷ In these earlier films, Dohrn neglects to mention her feminist activism that she now cites as one of the initial stages of activism in her political life.³⁸ The historical context has changed, and perhaps she viewed the question as activism in her political life related to SDS specifically; notably, she does not mention her activism around women's rights at all. However, women in the collective and their role as well as stigma are an issue that the documentary analyzes.

The interviewer in the documentary asks the men of the group if they believe that at one point the collective was putting an air of male arrogance to their message. Bill Ayers agrees and states, "There was a period of time when we put forward a vision of ourselves and a vision of revolution that was hard and mean and somewhat anti-human. [...] Revolutionaries and progressive people should be militant but not militaristic. And they should be challenging to people but they shouldn't be condescending."³⁹ Initially, Ayers does not address the issues of

³⁷ Refers to the House Un-American Activities Committee, a committee under the House of Representatives that was a reaction to the red scare and communism.

³⁸ According to Interview with Dohrn.

³⁹ *Underground*. Dir. Emile De Antonio, Haskell Wexler, and Mary Lampson. Perf. Bill Ayers, Kathy Boudin, Bernardine Dohrn, Jeff Jones and Cathy Wilkerson. Sphinx Productions, 1976. DVD.

male arrogance that the question posed but rather takes the question and equates male arrogance with militancy.⁴⁰ However, he does go on to cite historical context as a function of this problem: "In this environment, male chauvinism or sexism as a value plays a dominant, important, eliting role."⁴¹ Ayers cites the historical context and issues facing the country for its inherent male chauvinism. Later, Dohrn comments on the issue and makes the following statement: "Imperialism has as one of its underpinnings male supremacy. It's based on a system in which men are taught to think of themselves as superior. It's bred into all the institutions of society; into work, into the family, into schools, into hospitals, into medical care, into education."⁴² The Weathermen are citing this male arrogance and chauvinism as an imperialistic trait that they fell victim to because of the historical context and social construction of masculinity versus femininity. The shot goes to a fuzzy Cathy Wilkerson who states, "One of the hardest things was building a new culture where there is not an obvious alternative to sexist attitudes, for men for women for children for the whole society."⁴³ How could the women of the collective pursue radical changes for women when no alternatives were present? They were breaking new ground in terms of deconstructing gender roles, and this entailed a complete deconstruction of the way culture viewed gender. The women are not excluding themselves from the issues but rather pointing to how they worked on them. The screen shot cuts to visuals of the men at a meeting standing at the podium with Bill Ayers in the background commenting on the influence of women on changing the chauvinism occurring within the group: "It was really the women inside

⁴⁰ This is something I also seek to do throughout this thesis; for the purposes of the language, militancy is inherently male.

⁴¹ *Underground*. Dir. Emile De Antonio, Haskell Wexler, and Mary Lampson. Perf. Bill Ayers, Kathy Boudin, Bernardine Dohrn, Jeff Jones and Cathy Wilkerson. Sphinx Productions, 1976. DVD.

⁴² *Underground*. Dir. Emile De Antonio, Haskell Wexler, and Mary Lampson. Perf. Bill Ayers, Kathy Boudin, Bernardine Dohrn, Jeff Jones and Cathy Wilkerson. Sphinx Productions, 1976. DVD.

⁴³ *Underground*. Dir. Emile De Antonio, Haskell Wexler, and Mary Lampson. Perf. Bill Ayers, Kathy Boudin, Bernardine Dohrn, Jeff Jones and Cathy Wilkerson. Sphinx Productions, 1976. DVD.

the organization who brought about these changes by being really challenging, and firm, and strong in demanding change and at the same time loving, and open, and encouraging about the process of change.”⁴⁴ They speak to this process of change but never speak on the subject again with the documentary focus quickly going back to their acts of political violence. The role of women as well as the change they sought is discussed but not examined, perhaps another nod to the historical context of the moment. The role of gender and the difference between the men and women in the organization is never discussed in the documentary again, leaving 21st century questions unanswered about a decade of political upheaval and its role in gender construction. This was not the only documentary Dohrn appeared in, however. Using a close reading of a scene in a more recent documentary on the collective may provide details on how the gender roles have changed or remained.

A more recent documentary on the group entitled, “The Weather Underground” accounts for the history of the organization; from the split in SDS until 1980 when Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn turned themselves into the police.⁴⁵ The scene that details their reasoning for turning themselves in and the event itself illuminate the role of gender in Dohrn’s position in the Weather Underground. The scene begins with Dohrn in 2002, describing how she decided to turn herself in to the police. She explains in the clip that her two children were a major reason for her decision to turn herself in to the authorities: with her sons were getting older it was getting harder to explain why the family could not have people over to their house. Here, pictures of her and her sons are included in the documentary. On a rare occasion, the viewer is given a glimpse of the domestic side of Dohrn’s life. She is displayed in a different light; not the youthful Dohrn

⁴⁴ *Underground*. Dir. Emile De Antonio, Haskell Wexler, and Mary Lampson. Perf. Bill Ayers, Kathy Boudin, Bernardine Dohrn, Jeff Jones and Cathy Wilkerson. Sphinx Productions, 1976. DVD.

⁴⁵ *The Weather Underground*. Dir. Sam Green and Bill Siegel. Perf. Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, Mark Rudd, Brian Flanagan, Naomi Jaffe, Laura Whitehorn, David Gilbert, Kathleen Neal Cleaver, and Todd Gitlin. 2002. DVD.

reading a declaration of war, but the older, more mature motherly version of Dohrn, attending to her two sons. This image portrays to the viewer that with time Dohrn conformed to mainstream, westernized society and fulfilled her gender role. This in turn led to her feeling the need to surrender and come to terms with her radical past. The usage of motherhood as a catalyst for her official resignation from the radical Weather Underground through her surrendering is a symbol of leaving behind the militant, radical past for the gender constructed role of a mother. She is fulfilling her gender role and in order to do so must negate her militant history that opposes the social construction of womanhood.

This image of her with her children cuts to a newscast that recounts her surrender. The newscaster states, “Bernardine Dohrn, the former anti-war leader and student radical...”; again, Dohrn is placed in a leadership position and framed as a radical. Bill Ayers also turned himself in that day. As a fellow “anit-war leader” why was he not mentioned in the broadcast? When the documentary cuts to the news coverage of Dohrn’s actual surrendering she is placed in the camera view alone walking into the crowd of media representatives and then Ayers appears to give Dohrn a kiss and walk with her. Through the camera work, Dohrn is made more important to the viewer than Ayers; in fact the information that Ayers surrendered on the same day is not even included in the documentary. The news coverage also shows Dohrn delivering a speech at her surrendering, almost as though she was delivering a final communiqué. She states that she is “committed to the struggle ahead” of American resistance, but this statement is cloaked by the image of children the viewer saw thirty seconds before. Yes, Dohrn is committed to the struggle, but in her own way; as a mother of two and then in her thirties, Dohrn was taking a different, more passive role in the struggle.

This documentary scene shed light on the role of gender as it pertains to Dohrn and her role in the organization. Furthermore, the use of camera angles and pictures put Dohrn in a domesticated, female light which is something not seen in the earlier documentary from the 1970s. The stark contrast between the Bernardine Dohrn in the documentary from 1976 and the Bernardine Dohrn pictured in the 2002 released documentary is profound; the revolutionary who sits behind shadows of light in order to hide her identity is portrayed as a mother and former radical. The documentaries along with the photos create an image of Dohrn that is radical yet domesticated, militant yet motherly. The constant schism that is created between these identities because of the social construction of gender is evident and trails through all representations of Dohrn. Though visual representations of Dohrn are necessary to assess the gendered frame given to the radical, media also played a role in the way she was seen, and the way her gender played a role in this portrayal.

Representing Dohrn: The Pretty Brunette & The Fugitive

In order to grasp the complexity of Bernardine Dohrn's story and role within SDS and the Weather Underground, one must use media to situate her in context. Dohrn is mentioned in notable newspapers on the east coast, including the New York Times and Washington Post, countless times between 1968 and 2004. Her shifting role throughout the organization was captured by writers commenting on the radical culture of the 1960s and 1970s. The language surrounding her in newspaper articles also shifts, with the realization of her gender playing a factor in her portrayal. One must critically analyze Dohrn's role in media outlets in order to create a deeper framework helping us understand her story.

Bernardine Dohrn is first mentioned in the New York Times on August 18th, 1968. The article entitled, "Dissenters Focusing on Chicago"⁴⁶ by J. Anthony Lukas, introduces Dohrn to the greater public. The article focuses on planned demonstrations in Chicago about peace that would take place during the Democratic National Convention. Lukas introduces SDS and Dohrn to the reader. Dohrn is introduced as the "inter-organizational secretary"⁴⁷ for SDS; SDS

⁴⁶ Lukas, J. Anthony. "Dissenters Focusing on Chicago." *New York Times* 18 Aug. 1968. *New York Times*. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=3&did=89341287&SrchMode=1&sid=2&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332311906&clientId=42765>>.

⁴⁷ Lukas, J. Anthony. "Dissenters Focusing on Chicago." *New York Times* 18 Aug. 1968. *New York Times*. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

opposed the demonstrations, claiming that it would be an opportunity for the Mayor of Chicago, “Daley and his police to come in and close us down.”⁴⁸ The initial introduction that the world was given to Bernardine Dohrn is her apparent opposition to the local governance in Chicago, citing the police as an issue. She is framed as a critic of part of the system. This same sentiment is further emphasized by another quote from Dohrn shortly thereafter.

On May 13th, 1969 the New York Times published an article by Donald Janson entitled “5 In S.D.S. Seized By Chicago Police.”⁴⁹ The article details an incident that happened at the SDS national headquarters in Chicago, where local police “entered the headquarters [...] in response to anonymous false reports of a fire and shooting there.”⁵⁰ Several SDS members were arrested and charged with “interfering with police and fire officials” following a fracas that occurred when the police attempted to enter the building. The article provides quotes from Michael Klonsky, then SDS national secretary, as well as Bernardine Dohrn. “Miss Bernardine Dohrn, inter-organizational secretary, who was not arrested but attended the news conference, said it would be ‘preposterous’ to say that the incident here had occurred without the ‘advice and direction’ of the Justice Department.”⁵¹ Janson is sure to introduce Dohrn with the title “Miss”, stressing her unmarried status and thus giving the reader a gendered context. A woman is speaking out against the Justice Department, going so far as to use the word “preposterous” in

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=3&did=89341287&SrchMode=1&sid=2&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332311906&clientId=42765>>.

⁴⁸ Lukas, J. Anthony. "Dissenters Focusing on Chicago." *New York Times* 18 Aug. 1968. *New York Times*. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=3&did=89341287&SrchMode=1&sid=2&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332311906&clientId=42765>>.

⁴⁹ Janson, Donald. "5 In S.D.S. Seized By Chicago Police." *New York Times* [New York] 13 May 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=90104469&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312079&clientId=42765>>.

⁵⁰ Janson, Donald. "5 In S.D.S. Seized By Chicago Police." *New York Times* [New York] 13 May 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=90104469&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312079&clientId=42765>>. You can use "ibid," here.

⁵¹ Janson, Donald. "5 In S.D.S. Seized By Chicago Police." *New York Times* [New York] 13 May 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=90104469&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312079&clientId=42765>>.

reference to their relation to the incident (which Janson makes sure to include in the article). "It is part of a systematic attack led by Mitchell to frighten young people who are raising important issues in this country and to prevent the protests from escalating this summer and particularly when classes resume in the fall," she said.⁵² Once again, Dohrn names an official who is encroaching on their movement. John Mitchell, the Attorney General at the time had made a speech less than two weeks prior to the incident and said: "200 campuses had suffered disturbances and the 'time has come for an end to patience.'"⁵³ Dohrn has assumed the role of one of the main spokespersons for SDS, and bluntly states the local government officials she, and presumably the rest of SDS, see as oppositional. This person that is given the title "Miss" has already been painted as an oppositional force to local government. Dohrn soon became a fixed figure in American media, creating one of the faces of the radical counter-culture of the 1960s.

From the initial mention of Dohrn in the New York Times in 1968, her name continues to make headlines and news articles as both a member of SDS and later as a Weather Underground leader. Newspapers were running stories including Dohrn with no introduction or mention of her relation to the movement whatsoever: she became a representative of the movement as a whole. The Washington Post published an article written by Eric Wentworth on June 23rd, 1969 entitled "SDS Picks Mark Rudd as Leader" that details the election of Mark Rudd and the criticism of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) faction of SDS at the national SDS conference.⁵⁴ The article notes the harsh criticism that the "regulars" (who made up the majority of those in power in SDS)

⁵² Janson, Donald. "5 In S.D.S. Seized By Chicago Police." *New York Times* [New York] 13 May 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=90104469&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312079&clientId=42765>>.

⁵³ Janson, Donald. "5 In S.D.S. Seized By Chicago Police." *New York Times* [New York] 13 May 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=90104469&SrchMode=1&sid=3&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312079&clientId=42765>>.

⁵⁴ Wentworth, Eric. "SDS Picks Mark Rudd As Leader." *The Washington Post, Times Herald* [Washington, D.C.] 23 June 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=147204092&SrchMode=1&sid=5&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312242&clientId=42765>>.

had for the PLP faction, and then without any form of introduction Wentworth writes, “Miss Dohrn, in reading the resolution, attacked PLP for an inability to relate to the black struggle and to the revolution of workers in America,” and said the rival group was ‘not a viable part of the meaning of SDS.’”⁵⁵ ⁵⁶ Wentworth includes this quote from Dohrn as though the reader would already know who the speaker was, also using the title “Miss,” but completely omitting her first name. The readers of the New York Times at this moment in history were so aware of who Bernardine Dohrn was, that neither her full name nor context was necessary to include with her quote. Furthermore, her quotation is given importance, as no other member of the “regulars” in SDS was given the opportunity to express their opinion of the PLP schism. Dohrn is the sole representative of the “regulars” and is not even introduced as such; she is implicitly understood as such. This is also the case in other articles, where images of Dohrn are used, but she is not cited anywhere in the article.

The New York Times published an article entitled “2 Lawyers at ‘Chicago 8’ Trial Arrested on Contempt Charges”, written by J. Anthony Lukas in September of 1969.⁵⁷ The article recounts the events surrounding the lawyers of the “Chicago 8” trial.⁵⁸ Though not mentioned in the article at all, Lukas includes a picture of Bernardine Dohrn being arrested, pictured below, with the following caption: “Miss Bernardine Dohrn, a leader of Students for a

⁵⁵ Wentworth, Eric. "SDS Picks Mark Rudd As Leader." *The Washington Post, Times Herald*[Washington, D.C.] 23 June 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.
<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=147204092&SrchMode=1&sid=5&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312242&clientId=42765>.

⁵⁶ As they are called by Wentworth.

⁵⁷ Lukas, J. Anthony. "2 Lawyers at 'Chicago 8' Trial Arrested on Contempt Charges." *New York Times* [New York] 27 Sept. 1969. *New York Times*. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.
<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=78395231&SrchMode=1&sid=7&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312405&clientId=42765>.

⁵⁸ This was the trial of 8 (later 7, as Bobby Seale was severed from the case) that included activists that were charged with protest related charges surrounding riots that took place outside of the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

Democratic Society, as she was arrested by detectives of the intelligence division of Chicago police. She was accused of taking part in disorders protesting trial of the eight.”⁵⁹



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Once more, Dohrn is portrayed as an oppositional figure, this time being arrested for her actions. Rather than show anyone else who was arrested or even mentioned in the article, Lukas chose a picture of Dohrn, a female radical leader, to accompany the story. Furthermore, this is not the only article that this inclusion of Dohrn’s physical presence appears in, with the absence of her name or voice in the article itself. Irving Howe wrote an article published by the New York Times entitled, “Political Terrorism: Hysteria on the Left”⁶¹ that spoke to the New Left and its goals, but painted the picture of certain Leftists as political terrorists. The word “hysteria” itself

⁵⁹ Lukas, J. Anthony. "2 Lawyers at 'Chicago 8' Trial Arrested on Contempt Charges." *New York Times* [New York] 27 Sept. 1969. *New York Times*. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=78395231&SrchMode=1&sid=7&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312405&clientId=42765>>.

⁶⁰ Associated Press. 1969. Photograph. *New York Times*, New York. *New York Times*. Print.

⁶¹ Howe, Irving. "Political Terrorism: Hysteria on the Left." *New York Times* [New York] 12 Apr. 1970. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=121523473&SrchMode=1&sid=8&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312640&clientId=42765>>.

can be considered a gendered term, seen as a form of weakness that destabilizes the legitimacy of one's actions or thoughts; much like the social construction of what it is to be a woman in this patriarchal society. Though there is no mention of Dohrn in the article, she appears in a picture (shown below) with the following caption:

Phase II? – Some modern revolutionaries, all members of Students for a Democratic Society. From left: Jeff Melish; Dianne Donghi; Ted Gold, recently killed in a blast in a so-called 'bomb factory' on West 11st Street; Bernardine Dohrn, a Weatherman leader who has expressed some admiration for the murders in the Sharon Tate case in California; Kathy Boudin, missing in connection with the explosion on 11th Street, and Eleanor Raskin.⁶²



Dohrn is never mentioned in the article, and the one mention of her juxtaposed her with the image of murder, nonetheless a highly publicized murder of a woman.⁶⁴ At this time, her image in media begins to shift, becoming more radicalized and violent. She has shifted from "Miss Dohrn" to a radical leader in an article about a murder. Another important facet of analyzing

⁶² Howe, Irving. "Political Terrorism: Hysteria on the Left." *New York Times* [New York] 12 Apr. 1970. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=121523473&SrchMode=1&sid=8&Fmt=10&Vinst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312640&clientId=42765>>.

⁶³ *Phase II?* 1970. Photograph. New York Times, New York. *New York Times*. Print.

⁶⁴ Sharon Tate was an actress and was murdered by Charles Manson supporters in 1969.

media of Bernardine Dohrn is its recognition of gender, specifically as it relates to the radical movements.

Judith Martin wrote an article for the Washington Post that was published on February 23rd, 1969 entitled, "New Breed of Witches: Dedicated to Women's Freedom and Dignity". The article begins with an introduction to an action that the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH) participated in, and further highlights the different strands of the women's liberation movement and how it manifests itself. In the article, Naomi Jaffe and Bernardine Dohrn's Witch manifesto is highlighted and quoted from:

Mini-skirts and costume clothes and high boots and transparent make-up are fun and expressive and pretty," says the Witch manifesto by Naomi Jaffe and Bernardine Dohrn. "At the same time they are self-expression through things, through acquiring rather than becoming-and it is the expression commodities which sustains an economy that has to produce and sell more and more goods in order to survive.⁶⁵

Here, Dohrn is framed as a woman active in political organizations during the women's liberation movement. The article is neither positive nor negative, and presents the women's liberation movement in an unapologetic light. However, another article published only eight months later, paints a more negative picture of the women on the left, specifically those involved in the Weather Underground.

William Chapman wrote an article that was published in the Washington Post on October 10th, 1969 entitled "Guard Mobilized in Chicago To Prevent New Disorders."⁶⁶ The article

⁶⁵ Martin, Judith. "New Breed of Witches: Dedicated to Women's Freedom and Dignity." *Washington Post, Herald Times* [Washington, D.C.] 23 Feb. 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=19&did=146093232&SrchMode=1&sid=13&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQ T=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332312980&clientId=42765>>.

⁶⁶ Chapman, William. "Guard Mobilized in Chicago to Prevent New Disorders." *Washington Post, Herald Times* [Washington, D.C.] 10 Oct. 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&did=146434412&SrchMode=1&sid=14&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313068&clientId=42765>>.

recounts the events of the Days of Rage, one of the most notable actions by the Weather Underground Organization, and specifically focuses on the women's day of action. The women from the initial retelling of the story are portrayed as violent and bestial: "Police said some of the women kicked, spat and bit during the scuffle. Some of the injured officers were given tetanus shots after being bitten. The helmeted women, led by SDS official Bernardine Dohrn were stopped by police as they attempted to march out to Grant Park. Several were armed with short lead pipes and long wooden sticks."⁶⁷ The women are introduced as noncompliant from the beginning, and are further radicalized by the violence and animal-like behavior the article presents. This serves as a way to deny their actions any meaning or credit and portray them as irrational women.

The article goes on to recount the scuffle between the police and the women in more detail, stating that, "Officers wrestled six or eight to the ground as the women tried to kick them in their groins. Miss Dohrn and 11 others were carried or led limping into patrol wagons, some of them still kicking and screaming."⁶⁸ The phrase "kicking and screaming" gives a child-like image to the women; a sense of silliness to their action that one can state is gendered due to the patronizing tone of the article. Chapman makes the women out to be wild, untamed, child-like individuals that need to be controlled by the police and must fit back into their socially constructed role as tame and reserved women. The article frames the women as radical through their violence. Chapman then goes on to include Dohrn's role in the action: "Miss Dohrn had

⁶⁷ Chapman, William. "Guard Mobilized in Chicago to Prevent New Disorders." *Washington Post, Herald Times* [Washington, D.C.] 10 Oct. 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.
<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&did=146434412&SrchMode=1&sid=14&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313068&clientId=42765>.

⁶⁸ Chapman, William. "Guard Mobilized in Chicago to Prevent New Disorders." *Washington Post, Herald Times* [Washington, D.C.] 10 Oct. 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.
<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&did=146434412&SrchMode=1&sid=14&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313068&clientId=42765>.

urged the crowd to march on ‘that bastion of the imperialist army,’ the induction center. She told them, ‘We have to show that we are not just polite young ladies growing up in this country.’⁶⁹ This statement emphasizes the need for the women to step out of their gendered roles and stand up for the causes they find important. Almost facetiously, Chapman includes that quote and then states: “Miss Dohrn is a pretty brunette from an affluent Milwaukee suburb who earned a law degree before turning to radical politics.”⁷⁰ This quote directly before this sentence emphasizes how Dohrn feels about her position as a woman in the movement: she feels they must rise up and step out of socially constructed roles. Chapman, in a demonstration of male chauvinism, juxtaposed this quotation with a physical description of Dohrn that depicts a beautiful and educated woman that lost direction. Using the phrase “turn to” makes it seem as though radical politics should be a last resort for such a “pretty brunette.” While Dohrn attempts to incite the women, Chapman trivializes their action by focusing on the aspects of their action that had nothing to do with their overall message; i.e., Dohrn’s appearance.

Another article published in the New York Times several months later entitled “That’s what the Weathermen are supposed to be...’Vandals in the Mother Country’”⁷¹ written by John Kifner also recounts the events of the women’s day of action at the Days of Rage and portrays the story in a similar light.

⁶⁹ Chapman, William. “Guard Mobilized in Chicago to Prevent New Disorders.” *Washington Post, Herald Times* [Washington, D.C.] 10 Oct. 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&did=146434412&SrchMode=1&sid=14&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313068&clientId=42765>>.

⁷⁰ Chapman, William. “Guard Mobilized in Chicago to Prevent New Disorders.” *Washington Post, Herald Times* [Washington, D.C.] 10 Oct. 1969. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&did=146434412&SrchMode=1&sid=14&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313068&clientId=42765>>.

⁷¹ Kifner, John. “That’s What The Weathermen Are Supposed to Be...” *New York Times* [New York] 4 Jan. 1970. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012.

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=354683912&SrchMode=1&sid=18&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313275&clientId=42765>>.

"For the first time in history women are getting themselves together," Bernardine Dohrn, a University of Chicago law-school graduate and leading Weatherwoman, told the huddle. "We're not picketing in front of bra factories now. We're not a women's organization engaged in self-indulgent ----- A few buckshot wounds means we're doing the right thing...Bullets are not going to stop us. Threats are not going to stop us... We're living behind enemy lines... We refuse to be good Germans..."⁷²

The power and activism that this small excerpt from Dohrn's speech to her women is quickly refuted by Kifner's language choice and overall tone when retelling the events that ensued after the women began to march. "The scuffle was brief. A dozen women were gritting their teeth, cursing, wiggling and kicking as they struggled in the grip of burly officers. Some were wrestled to the ground by several policemen; others were half-dragged, half-carried to waiting paddy wagons,".⁷³ The women are portrayed as powerless in the hands of "burly" policemen. They can only wiggle and kick and even then they struggle. The socially constructed gendered bias that the writer uses in this article portrays the sentiments of the media about the women's action at the Days of Rage: they were unruly and disruptive children who needed to be disciplined and rationalized. The shift that takes place in newspaper outlets after this time is quite significant, and Dohrn's persona in the newspapers shifts from portraying Dohrn as a radical woman, to portraying her as a fugitive.

The image of Bernardine Dohrn takes a slight shift in 1970. Generally, the words used to describe Dohrn became more negative, and the word "fugitive" became status quo in her introduction in articles: "...the voice of Bernardine Dohrn, a fugitive leader of the radical Weatherman organization, predicted a bombing offensive from coast to coast against government

⁷² Kifner, John. "That's What The Weathermen Are Supposed to Be..." *New York Times* [New York] 4 Jan. 1970. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=354683912&SrchMode=1&sid=18&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313275&clientId=42765>>.

⁷³ Kifner, John. "That's What The Weathermen Are Supposed to Be..." *New York Times* [New York] 4 Jan. 1970. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=354683912&SrchMode=1&sid=18&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313275&clientId=42765>>.

buildings [...]”⁷⁴; “A week ago a New Left press conference exposed reporters to the tape-recorded voice of fugitive Weatherman leader Bernardine Dohrn, predicting a new terror offensive from coast to coast [...]”⁷⁵; “He described the Weathermen as ‘fanatical revolutionaries’ and identified Mark Rudd and Bernardine Dohrn as two of its leaders. The latter he said, is educated and intelligent but ‘about as amoral as you can possibly find,’”⁷⁶; “Dissident members of the Weather Underground, including Bernardine Dohrn, probably the best known of the fugitives, say that the groups’ leadership plans to abandon violence and to concentrate on open political work,”⁷⁷; Garoner said his investigation showed that the FBI immediately terminated a telephone tap directed at Jennifer Dohrn, the sister of Weatherman fugitive Bernardine Dohrn and herself an avowed Weatherman [...]”⁷⁸. Dohrn’s image shifts completely, generally no longer referred to as “Miss” but often referred to as a fugitive. It appears that the violence that the Weather Underground was known for and the fact that Dohrn was one of their main spokespeople greatly impacted how her gender played a role in her media portrayal. From an unruly child to a pretty brunette and then to a radical fugitive, Dohrn had many images in the media. As the face of one of the most radical factions of the New Left, Dohrn became a staple in newspapers, soon needing little to no introduction when included in an article. However, her

⁷⁴ Arnold, Martin. “3 Bombs Damage Building In City.” *New York Times* [New York] 31 Oct. 1970. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=41&did=78215690&SrchMode=1&sid=19&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313439&clientId=42765>>.

⁷⁵ “Bombings and Politics.” *New York Times* [New York] 13 Oct. 1970: 44. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=78196485&SrchMode=1&sid=21&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313574&clientId=42765>>.

⁷⁶ Anderson, Jack. “Revolutionary Fugitives Stymie FBI.” *Washington Post, Herald Times* [Washington, D.C.] 3 Mar. 1971: D13. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=157354592&SrchMode=1&sid=22&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313642&clientId=42765>>.

⁷⁷ “Radical Weather Group Leaders Reported Planning to Surrender.” *New York Times* [New York] 16 Jan. 1977: 22. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=75016357&SrchMode=1&sid=23&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313790&clientId=42765>>.

⁷⁸ Kiernan, Laura A. “Weatherman Link to Foreign Power Held a ‘Judgment Call’” *Washington Post* [Washington, D.C.] 20 Sept. 1980: A2. ProQuest. Web. 12 Jan. 2012. <<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&did=130594562&SrchMode=1&sid=26&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1332313934&clientId=42765>>.

image of the “intelligent girl going in the wrong direction” soon turned to the image of the “radical fugitive” and the media was less and less forgiving over time. This process of gendering and then disengendering of Dohrn in the media is a further demonstration of the way in which she continuously shattered the idea of the socially constructed woman.

Conclusion

*"[...] millions of women participated in the labor movement or participated in the southern civil rights movement. How many mothers are involved in you know opposition to wars? You know, you have to kinda, just because the men will write the history [Laughs] doesn't mean he makes the history."*⁷⁹

The story of Bernardine Dohrn is one that has been overlooked and absent from the histories of SDS and the Weather Underground. Her politicization did not begin with SDS but rather with a small women's collective in New York City in 1967. Her gender played a role in her political activism throughout her career, yet is often unacknowledged as a point of critical analysis by historians and activists alike. By analyzing her different identities: her voice in the movement, her visual representations in photograph and film and the identity created for her through media; the story of Bernardine Dohrn begins to come together as a tale of political revolution and symbolic social deconstruction. Through the assessment of the many identities of Bernardine Dohrn, one can begin to see how Dohrn bent the gender rules of the time and worked to challenge the westernized social construction of womanhood.

Dohrn functioned as the voice of the movement and further as the voice of radical politics in the 1960s. With her literal voice delivering the Weather Underground's state of war against the American government, and her signature on the end of countless Weatherman documents and

⁷⁹ "Bernardine Dohrn Interview." Telephone interview. 23 Jan. 2012.

communiques, Dohrn served as the representative of the collective on many levels. With the voice of the movement belonging to the mouth of a woman, Dohrn challenged the social construction of womanhood in relation to leadership, especially when placed into the context of a militant organization. The juxtaposition of the violent message of the collective with Dohrn's voice or name presents a tension between the idea of the historically passive, gentle woman and the radical, politically informed woman of the 1960s. By becoming the voice of a radically violent movement, Dohrn challenged gender constructions inherent in American society. However, this propagation of her challenge to social construction is not only supported by her voice and signature but also by her appearance in film, specifically.

This thesis called on the use of two documentaries on the Weather Underground, one shot while the collective was underground and one decades later as a reflective documentary on the organization. Both provide insight into the evolution of the social construction of womanhood as it applied to Dohrn; the former showing the viewer the radical Dohrn while the latter presents Dohrn in a more domesticated, gender constructed light. The viewer has the opportunity to see and hear Dohrn in her most radical and militant years, with gender as a topic of discussion but something quickly grazed over. In the later film, the viewer has the opportunity to see Dohrn as a mother and a member of society, not as a fugitive on the run hiding behind sheets to conceal her physical appearance. The use of motherhood as the facilitator of Dohrn's de-radicalization further emphasizes the social constructs that are embedded in our culture as a whole. The two documentaries work to further create the story of Dohrn and her role as a woman in the collective; with more gaps filled, the story of Dohrn comes together, but not without the evaluation of the identity that media created for her.

Bernardine Dohrn became a regular actor in news clippings during the late 1960s and 1970s. Her persona began as one of a politically active college female. With a constant prefix of “Miss”, her gender is hard to ignore in the media- yet for the first few years it is only addressed when in relation to her physical appearance, if at all. Slowly, Dohrn becomes an elusive figure in the media, losing her prefix for the most part and instead described with words such as “fugitive” and “radical”. The disengendering of her identity in the media speaks to the constant challenge that Dohrn presented to the idea of the socially constructed woman. The media wanted her to fit the mold of the gendered woman, but her personal politics and ideology fought against what society saw as the role of a woman. This third identity further reflects Dohrn’s role in the movement; the political force of a woman fighting the gender constructions held by men.

Bernardine Dohrn’s story amounts to one of political upheaval and gendered reconstruction. She is the embodiment of a powerful woman; she worked alongside men in a militant organization and fought against injustices she believed were occurring. Her story is one missing from the historical context of the 1960s and 1970s radical history though she was a key player in one of the most radical movements that formed in the United States **in its history**. By bridging the gaps in the story, this thesis works to portray Dohrn as the opposition to the social construction of womanhood. To recreate the story of Bernardine Dohrn is to recreate the story of the female American radical during the 1960s and 1970s, and her gendered position in this historical context cannot be ignored.

Appendix A: Transcription of Interview with Bernardine Dohrn on January 23rd, 2012

BD- Bernardine Dohrn

CB- Carla Bautista

Carla Bautista: Hi, how are you?

Bernardine Dohrn: I'm good.

CB: Thanks so much for finally figuring out a time with me. [Laughs]

BD: Thank you, sorry for all the ups and downs of it. Hold on a minute I'm just gunna [sic] close my door, okay?

CB: Sure.

BD: Hold on. Okay, hi.

CB: Hi, I guess I should ask first, is it okay if I record this?

BD: Sure, it's fine with me.

CB: Okay.

BD: I'm assuming that it's just for the purposes of your research and you're not going to use it in any other way.

CB: Oh yea, definitely.

BD: Okay, it's fine.

CB: Well again thanks so much for agreeing to talk to me, and I guess before I ask any questions I could just give you a quick tidbit on how I started this project out. I took a radical movements class last year that one of the topics was the Weather Underground. It was kinda [sic] focusing on radical American history that's not taught in the everyday history class. So we did a whole section on the Weather Underground and obviously you were a part of that section, and when it came to thesis time I was trying to think of things that I learned in class that interested me and I think that as a- I guess I would like to call myself an activist- as a female, 21 year old activist at a college it was definitely interesting to hear your story; to see a female at the forefront of such a militant organization. So I guess that's kinda how it started and I guess if you got a chance to read the intro [to my thesis] at all...

BD: I did read it.

CB: Awesome, I am kinda focusing on the fact that you were a woman leader and what that meant especially for the social history of the time. So I guess, I guess I'll just put this as vague as possible for the first question. I guess my biggest question is I was sort've wondering - given the time period you decided to join SDS and then later on the Weather Underground, I was wondering why you didn't join, I guess, a feminist group of the movement? Or like how you decided that you wanted to join an organization like SDS at first.

BD: Okay well, I'm gunna just back up a little bit.

CB: Sure.

BD: I think you have the dates a little wrong, at least in the introduction. I didn't join SDS until 1968.

CB: Okay.

BD: And that was an older SDS. I mean well you know in that period, and maybe today too, every two years is a generation, so in the sense that it was a student organization and people left school and graduated from school and were no longer students. So it [SDS] had a tremendous amount of turnover. By the time I joined I was a law- I joined from law school so I [mumbled word] may have been the future student politics when I was an undergraduate myself. And I came to it, you know, in the black freedom movement and through the war. So those, those were the kind of you know forces that drew me into political activity from growing up. And by 1968, 1967- um 68, was the first time that the second wave of feminist was starting. So you know I was part of a women's group that formed in 67 as soon as I graduated from law school and moved to New York and it was happening kinda spontaneously and simultaneously across the country right at that moment. So it was [mumbled words] just emerging- the very first [mumbled word] really weren't published until 1967 68 from our from that generation. Obviously no one thinks that we're important in actual history which we had to kinda uncover and discover at the time. So I think that because your chronology is a little wrong it looks like, I don't know, it just looks different. And otherwise, I did make choices of course. I made choices about trying to integrate the issues that I thought, multiple issues that I thought were very important. I guess context, I guess I would tell you overall context, is you can't understand anything without indicating context in the historical moment. So at that moment in 1967 when I graduated from law school, moved to New York, was sorta forming a women's group that was you know just listening to other women and telling their stories and freaking out that we had so many things, you know, in common: anxieties about ourselves, hope, understanding of women's history or the earlier feminist movements in the world. You just kinda never, well you're always reading men. I mean there were no women's studies, there was nothing that subsequently followed feminism, so part of it was both a self-discovery and a projected critical analysis of the world that we'd grown up in and understood. So I think that's, it made at least my reading of some of the language you use in the introduction...it puzzled me I guess because I think- first of all the MIZ organization didn't

exist, and I always considered MIZ kind of a conservative organization at the time because of the way women's [mumbled word] groups were forming and starting to take action in the streets was a far cry from MIZ, it was the younger generation and we came up in a moment between the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement of a much more, of fierce sense of direct action. So the initial collectives were about you know, kinda, like [mumbled word] and challenging advertising, women in advertising, the use of women's bodies, the construction of women as images of, that were pleasing to men and kinda women as object instead of subject- victim instead of actor in history. So all of that was part of what we were trying to think about and that's how it appeared in SDS. So I had just become at the very conference for which I was selected as a national leader of SDS, there was a women's presentation which I was not part of on the stage and the entire auditorium exploded in anger with men shouting at the women on the stage, women getting in the audience, fighting with women on the stage. You know in every organization not just in SDS, this idea that women, that we were breaking out of traditional roles, [mumbled word] being enacted, and it was a new idea. So, one more, I guess one more framework I wanna give you. Two or three years later things had changed, there was such a thing as a women's movement it was being organized by the media, it was taking action in Atlantic City at the Miss America Pageant, it was. [Mumbled word] In thinking about whether we should organize, you know separately as separatists and create organizations in which men were not allowed. So a whole lot of development happened between 1967 and 1969 in which time there was actually a women's movement. So, my experience of being [mumbled word] for example, of the war in Vietnam, which in those years you could, 1967 68 69, was, you know, escalating enormously with a million American troops there, [mumbled word] wars being conducted in Laos which we now know, the most bombed territory in the world. Almost 1,000 people a day, something like 900 people a day being killed by the United States in South Asia everyday over a period of what we now know is ten years but at the time we thought we could stop. [Laughs] And where we felt there wasn't a war is when you're opening a war against communism but by 1967, 68, 69 it clearly wasn't just a war against communism, it was a war against national liberation [mumbled words] and Vietnam. It was a war, you know it was in that exchange for placing the French as a colonial power in the economic and and relative power dominating Vietnam and South Asia and against China and Russia- the region. So I feel like the time table matters here because the framework of where it was changed and by 1967, 68, U.S. government was no longer even sending out department spokespeople to argue for the war in Vietnam because, as you mentioned, it's so discredited on campus' and because the opposition to the draft had grown so big and because even resistance within the military had grown so big. So that, you know, that I'm just trying to set a framework here in which, for me, the choices, you know I still don't feel like I made the right choice, I don't know if there was a right choice. I felt like I was taking the feminism that I was just growing to understand into the anti-war and anti-racist movements. And that while many of my friends were going into a separatists, womanists kinda form of organizing I felt that we couldn't you know leave Vietnam or the questions of the freedom movement to the side as white women. So I did make that kinda political choice, but I

didn't see it as- I tried not to see it as- an ideologue choice in a sense that there were some women's organizations, all women's organizations, that formed that were dedicated to doing our part to continuing [mumbled word] against the war, although they became a minority in the women's movement at that moment in time. So I guess what, you know, we were all trying to integrate the issues from different sides, not all, but many of us were trying to integrate the issues from different sides. Does that make sense to you?

CB: Yes, definitely I think that that framework definitely makes more sense to me given the story. That part has definitely been a difficult point in this process like getting the dates right, because I feel like three books will tell you one, and one book will tell you differently. But that was...

BD: And one of the things that seemed to me to be missing from your list, oh well maybe it's in your longer thesis, you know all I saw was the introduction but there have been a couple of memoirs and a couple of books of collections and one in particular, which I wrote the introduction in and I think you should look at. I mean I know it's late and you've already written this but I think it would just help you with the dating. So for example, Cathy Wilkerson's memoir which I've now forgotten the title of, was published about five years ago or six years ago and you know so that's an example, I guess, of a woman writing her story and she's quite critical of the ways in which the Weather Underground continued to reflect certain aspects of sexism and male supremacy but she also understands why she was there and what her role in that, in changing that and challenging that was. And, I wrote an introduction to a collection of writings from the time called "Sing a Battle Song" that you might look at in which I'm also, have some, criticisms of things that I wish [mumbled words] or that I'd done differently but also kinda an explanation for what I think we were thinking about.

CB: Awesome, I think that that kinda leads me into my next question, which- reading through, the books that I've read through anyway so far, about the Weather Underground I think that it's framed as a chauvinistic organization in certain ways. And, both by opponents that I've read and maybe even fans and I was wondering if that at all, while you were in the organization effected your role?

BD: Well most of, well first of all most of the people you're reading are men.

CB: Right, exactly.

BD: [Mumbled words] seems like nothings changed. [Laughs] But you know it is interesting that many of the kinda writers about the Weather Underground, most of them are men. You know I think it's- my role, Jane Fonda's role, to some extent Angela Davis' role- I'm not putting myself with them in terms of luminaries but I'm [mumbled word] portraying, I think the idea of women being fierce critics of U.S. government policy in practice in the world elicited a certain kind of

anger and I think that's part of what you're getting at here or what you're interested in writing about. I do think that you know, when Jane Fonda- I met her earlier because we're both travelling and speaking in coffee houses outside US military bases and one of the strategies at the time that developed around being able to get information to guys that were in the military and both the war in Vietnam and what was really happening there. [Mumbled words] coffee houses right outside of the military base and guys would go there when they were off, when they were able to [mumbled word] space.

CB: Right.

BD: And Jane Fonda, for example, did a tremendous amount of, spent a year and a half speaking there and you know kinda challenging the United States rationale for, you know, what many of us think turned out to be, you know, a genocidal and disastrous war and America's longest war. So, you know, I spoke there at the time as a lawyer doing military organizing and organizing support for military resistance, so and she I think, for example, even when she was married to Tom Hayden and went to Vietnam, why didn't he get the attacks that she got? He went on to be a congressman and you know statesperson and she certainly survived it but the type of vitriol directed at her or at other, you know, women leaders was uniquely filled with hatred and I would argue gendered hated. You know, so I think, I think there's something there and I think that it lingers all these years later that kinda, you know, right wing obsession with me, for example, is an example that I don't know how else to explain it. There were certainly hundreds of other people, thousands, tens of thousands of other people who, you know, were militant who camped and knocked and [mumbled words] were in big street demonstrations [mumbled words] the border between [mumbled word] direct action and militancy. But, you know, kinda the, one of the things that singled out, that characterized the time is, is women. And I guess it's stepping out these gender, straight jacket roles there's only so much to be expected but then there's kinda I would argue a voyeuristic kinda ugliness that's particular.

CB: Yeah, I think that I mean it was most interesting, I guess, to me that when I was taking the class in 2011, obviously not much has changed if I in 2011 am kinda shocked that you were a leader. You know what I mean? At that time period. So I guess that speaks a lot to the way things sorta still are. [Laughs]

BD: Yeah, and it's also true when you look back, of course, at any period more deeply- I just finished reading a friends book about anarchists in New York in 1914 and there were tons of women leaders right?

CB: Right.

BD: I mean Emma Goldman is the one that everybody knows but there were tons of women leaders whose names I didn't know. Who, you know, literally were speaking at Union Square

every day, were leading marches of thousands of people, were working with the unemployed, were making bombs, or getting arrested [mumbled words]. So I'm just saying if you poke your finger into any period of history it still remains in our minds, and often even in academia the history where light doesn't shine. [Laughs] So I think we know enough to say well, come on you know it's always there and if it's invisible it's just because it's been overlooked or obscured or silenced.

CB: Right, exactly. Do you think that, especially given the time period and the fact that you were at one point were part of some sort of women's group, do you think that while you were in SDS and in the Weather Underground, especially, with like letters being signed by you and things like that. Do you think that while you wrote these or you delivered speeches you reflected on the fact that you were a woman? Or do you think that that in anyway changed the way that you voiced certain things?

BD: That's a good question. I think I was, I was, very aware of it, because look when I, when I...I was aware of it because when I went to law school there were only six women in the law school. I was aware of it because when I started organizing in the national lawyers guild against the war and you know I was the only woman.

CB: Right.

BD: I was aware of it because when I was the first woman elected to national office, national office, national leadership in SDS you know it was commented about. I was aware of it because that year when I went speaking, I spoke in Yale, and at Princeton and you know it was 100% male you know, the audience it was absolutely creepy I have to say and I don't want to say assaulted, that's a little too strong of a word but you know it was difficult. Because of the debate around the war which was, which I was very familiar with by then and was easy to, pretty easy to win people over but because, you know, the audience, because of the lawyerisitic (?) quality of it, because the audience was, I don't know, just in another element. Menace is too strong a word, but you know it was a complicated thing I'd say. And I was also increasingly aware of it because I traveled those years speaking you know at different places and organizing chapters and giving encouragement to people and I was in a women's group continuously through that period of time and I, you know, was encouraging women but not, I think back now, not sufficiently who were in SDS to, you know, challenge their own rules. To not, you know, work on the mimeograph machine but to be writing the articles. To, you know, be considered for leadership without having to be in a relationship with one of the guys who are the leaders. To consider that there's different ways of being a leader and it isn't always talking. [Laughs]

CB: Right [Laughs]

BD: So, you know, so it was all happening. I mean everybody was trying to, you know, tear the blindfold off of our eyes and see what a profound difference it was, and at the same time buy 1969, 1970 there was the emergence of the gay movement, so it was both complicated by sexual

identity and sexual roles but also to add to the challenge of how we think about ourselves and different ways of identities. We have multiple identities. We have many identities. Right, I'm a Midwest person and the first person to college and half-Jewish, you know I have a million identities. Now I'm a grandmother and a professor. You know so you, you're not a single identity, you're many things but at different points in your life certain identities become you know all consuming. Student. Graduate student. Women. Pregnant Women. [Laughs] Their always changing and always shuffling and you're trying to reconcile them without losing your many other identities, and in a period of tremendous upheaval in this period you're writing about those are shifting so rapidly and so crazily.

CB: Right.

BD: That, you know, you're trying to, you know, keep your coherence without having to reject some of them.

CB: Right, exactly.

BD: So that's, that's just very very complicated. I feel like yes I could easily- I just this weekend was with my college roommate and she went off and joined and all women's commune [Laughs] in 1972, 1971, 1972. And then by 1977 when I gave birth to my first son she didn't want, she wouldn't let me come if I was bringing my baby, infant, newborn son to her all women's commune because he was a man.

CB: Wow.

BD: I mean we were all, anyway, well obviously, [mumbled words] we were all trying to figure it out right? Where you draw the line and how do you get clarity about who you are and where you fit in the world and I think that if honestly done is always kinda a radical act.

CB: Right, definitely.

BD: I'm talking too long.

CB: No, no you've answered pretty much all of my questions indirectly [Laughs]. So it's okay.

BD: [Laughs] I would like to ask you a question or two before we're done.

CB: Sure.

BD: Because I think some of the language you use, I don't understand.

CB: Okay.

BD: I don't understand your thinking of us as a masculinized group.

CB: Okay.

BD: Or masculine revolutionary group because, even if you're talking about the Weather Underground, certainly SDS, we were, you know, it was always at least half women.

CB: Right.

BD: Increasingly I would say, certainly very rapidly increasing from 1968 on, you know, equal numbers of women in leadership, and in action and in activity.

CB: Okay.

BD: So, I mean you can characterize it that way if you, if you think that militancy is masculine, in and of itself, but I don't argue that. We don't really say that Harriet Tubman was a masculinized actor in history because she carried a gun in order to free the slaves.

CB: Right.

BD: We just don't do that, so, but she was certainly a pioneer and most of her comrades, you know worked for probably men.

CB: Right.

BD: But I don't think that makes her a masculinized leader so I just feel like, I know what you mean we're all operating in a framework, where I think at least, male supremacy is still a really powerful and maybe all deciding force. But, you know, you wanna really use language that keeps that dynamic relationship of [mumbled word] what is always at play.

CB: Okay, okay. Definitely. Yeah, I think that I was I guess I was essentially putting it in the framework that militancy is inherently masculine but you're right, when it comes to things like Harriet Tubman and even I guess Emma Goldman could be considered that too.

BD: Absolutely, but millions of women participated in the labor movement or participated in the southern civil rights movement. How many mothers are involved in you know opposition to wars? You know, you have to kinda, just because the men will write the history [Laughs] doesn't mean he makes the history. So, it's true that there's an overall structure of institutionalized and structural male supremacy, but it doesn't make everything male.

CB: Right.

BD: Of course, the Port Huron Statement, it's like the Declaration of Independence, no "she" [Laughs] because it wasn't you know, it just wasn't, we didn't know.

CB: Right.

BD: So that yea, so that's where we also mask it. Male supremacists is [mumbled word] about it, that's also important to point out. And it is the 50th anniversary of Port Huron as well. A lot of Port Huron reunions suddenly happening around the country right now. I'm going to go to one in Santa Barbara.

CB: Oh wow, very cool.

BD: So it's an interesting time and I think the list of people involved that are pulling it together are 90% men you'll be interested to know. [Laughs]

CB: [Laughs]

BD: Maybe they still consider it our finest hour. [Laughs] [Mumbled words] They didn't know when they were doing it that they were gunna be, you know, opening, I say to my students today I say you know I think liberation is intoxicating. So if you find yourself in a freedom movement, around racism for example, it's almost inevitable that it's gunna lead to freedom movements for women. And then freedom movements for gay people and then freedom movements for disabled people right and so on. So it, one of the things that keeps the 60s so [mumbled words] vital in American history is that its lead to a whole series of, a whole series of progeny or offspring you know that continues to resonate today.

CB: Definitely. Were there any other word choices or anything else that you think could've been framed differently I guess? Granted that the intro is a rough draft so this is great [Laughs].

BD: [Laughs] Yea, well I think that you, it is interesting to look at for example the women's march in the Days of Rage, which didn't get very far [Laughs] got half a block before everybody was arrested and so I was {mumbled word} at the time we all were [mumble words] at the time. But, as militant as our rhetoric was, we didn't do anything that militant right? We got arrested and surrounded by a thousand Chicago police and you know jumped on [mumbled word] before we did anything. So that's worth noting I think. And then there was a collective in the underground of women and a series of women's actions [mumbled words] communiques by women work by women, you know kinda attempted to integrate our own sense of our identity. And some of them, some of them involved the war but some of them involved cutbacks in [mumbled word] administration and funding for poor women and children. So I think that the notion of kinda using your multiple selves to, you know, to challenge- to try to identify the major issues of our moment. All of us, you too, [mumbled word] name the moment you're in, right and that's, you can't act unless you think you've identified some of the major issues of your time, so you know we were focused or even obsessed you could say with the American war in Vietnam and also with the black freedom movement, the civil rights movement as it came north, it became the national liberation movement, and the need to engage in solidarity with those struggles. I think you have this kinda, you know I forgot that this was true in [mumbled word] Morgan's letter but she called us Manson slaves you know. And obviously that's, you know insane. I don't think she could [mumbled word] back that up today. We were [mumbled word] those kinds of

attacks and it's a back and forth dialogue even when we were underground, with the feminists with the black freedom movement with the catholic underground [mumbled words] in those days, you know there was public dialogue between everybody about what we should and how we should do it. So, it was kinda a fabulous democratic and open engagement about what was the most important thing to be doing, or even if it wasn't the most important thing how we could integrate the issues. You see what I mean?

CB: Right, yea.

BD: So, when I think of even the criticism that didn't feel good sometimes [Laughs] it was productive, became productive because we responded to underground to [mumbled words] and they responded about what they were gunna do about Vietnam and racism. The catholic, of course, had its own militant style and militancy. You know, we were all somehow engaged in this discourse about what we should and shouldn't do. So, I think it was a very productive debate even though it was [mumbled words] words tend to be kinda harsh.[Laughs]

CB: [Laughs] Okay, well this has been really, really great. Thank you so much.

BD: Okay well I hope it's helpful and I'm glad you're interested in these issues. Oh the other thing I was gunna tell you besides the Wilkerson and "Sing a Battle Song" was have you looked at the films? The D'Antonio film and the Sam Green, there's two Weather Underground films.

CB: I've seen one of them. Yes.

BD: Okay, anyway [mumbled words] contemporary piece on it. [Laughs] Archival Research.

But I'm glad you called me and I wish you the best of luck in this.

CB: Thank you so much this has been incredibly helpful. I think you answered all my questions but if I think of anything else is it okay if I email you?

BD: Absolutely.

CB: Okay thank you so much.

BD: No problem.

CB: Have a great day.

BD: You too Carla, take care.

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